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### THE LESSON OF DOG RIVER

Approximately 10 kilometers north of Beirut, the Dog River (Nahr al-Kalb) flows into the Mediterranean. It is a small stream both in length and volume; and from the standpoint of the economy of the Middle East, or even that of Lebanon, its value is negligible. It supplies some water to the city of Beirut, but beyond that it serves little purpose. Its waters turn no electric turbines, irrigate no large tracts. Yet the Dog River is not without significance, for it is, in a sense, symbolic of the entire Middle East and of that area's history.

Since the dawn of recorded history, the Middle East has been disputed by contending nations, by opposing armies. Here the air has echoed to the sound of Assyrian, Babylonian, Pharaonic chariots, the marching of Greek phalanxes and Roman legions, to the tramp of Byzantine, Arab, Mameluke, Turkish, English and French armies. Most of these armies, in the course of their campaigns, have passed by the mouth of the Dog River; and near the sea, on the rocky walls of the ravine through which the river flows, many of them left a reminder of their passing -- engraved inscription or sculptured relief to perpetuate the memory of their conquests.

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Today, the thoughtful Middle Easterner or, for that matter, any serious student of area affairs, when he reflects on the lesson of Dog River and, at the same time, on the current situation in the Middle East, must inevitably wonder if the Soviet Red Army will be the next to add to the Dog River inscriptions.

The Soviet Union is today more active in Middle Eastern affairs than at any time in its 40 years of history. But this activity -- sale of arms to Egypt and Syria, machinations in Jordan, increased tempo of diplomatic and propaganda action throughout the area -- represents neither a new interest nor an interest which is peculiarly Soviet.

#### THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

This activity is merely the latest manifestation of a policy which the communists inherited from the previous Tsarist regime -- a policy which Peter the Great put into force for the first time in the latter part of the 17th century with a series of campaigns against the Ottoman empire. Although the territories he gained were held only temporarily by the Russians, his insistence on the need for warm water ports made the idea of southward expansion an integral part of Russian policy.

When he died in 1725 he left behind a document known as the "Political Testament of Peter the Great," in which he set down for the guidance of his successors his recommendations as to the policy which Russia should pursue with a view to becoming a great empire. One of these recommendations is particularly significant:

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"To take every possible means of gaining Constantinople and the Indies (for he who rules there will be sovereign of the world): excite war continually in Turkey and Persia; establish fortresses in the Black Sea; get control of the seas by degrees, and also of the Baltic, which is a double point, necessary to the realization of our project; accelerate as much as possible the decay of Persia; penetrate to the Persian Gulf; reestablish, if possible by way of Syria, the ancient commerce of the Levant."

There has been some argument as to the authenticity of this testament, but authentic or not, it outlines succinctly the policy laid down by Peter and followed consistently by all his successors, not excluding the Communist leaders of Soviet Russia. Constantinople and the Straits of the Persian Gulf, together with the lands lying between -- these were the goals of the Tsars; they are now the goals of the Soviets.

#### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By the end of the 18th century, through wars and their resultant treaties, Russia's policy of expansion southward showed remarkable results. During Catherine the Great's reign (1762-1796), for the first time, subversion was used, with Russian agents agitating among the slavic and orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire.

In the Russo-Turkish war waged from 1768 to 1774 Russian forces were generally successful, both on land, especially in the Rumanian principalities, and on the sea, by means of a Russian flotilla on the Mediterranean.

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The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji in 1774 was a triumph for Russia, which gained for the first time direct access to the Black Sea, between the mouths of the Dnieper and Bug Rivers, as well as the fortresses of Kerch, Yenikale, Azov and Kinburn and the districts of Kuban, Terek and Kabardia. Territorially the treaty represented an even greater gain for Russia than appeared on the surface. One of its clauses provided for the independence of the Crimean Tatar Khanate, which the Russians promised to respect. Nine years later however, the Russians occupied and annexed the Khanate. The annexation was later agreed to by Turkey in the Treaty of Jassy (1792) which ended another Russo-Turkish war. By that treaty Russia also gained an additional stretch of Black Sea Coast, between the Bug and Dneister rivers.

#### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the 19th century Russian expansion southward was made at the expense of both Turkey and Iran.

In 1801 Russia annexed Georgia over which Persia had claimed sovereignty.

The Treaty of Gulistan in 1813, following a six year war between Russia and Persia, resulted in Russia's gaining the provinces of Baku, Karabagh, Shirwan, Derbent, Shaki and Talish. Persia was also forced to renounce all claims to Georgia, Daghestan, Mingrelia, and Abkhasia (which the Russians had already claimed and occupied) and to agree to domination of the Caspian by the Russian Navy.

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In 1828, after another war with Russia, Persia ceded the provinces of Erivan and Nakchivan, thereby establishing the Perso-Russian border in the Caucasus at the Aras river, where it still remains.

In Transcaspia Russian expansion continued. In 1837 Russia had occupied the Persian Island of Ashur Ada in the bay of Astarabad and, in 1869, the city of Krasnovodsk, which had been under nominal Persian suzerainty.

Russian expeditions in 1873 conquered the hitherto independent Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara, leaving the Turkoman steppe -- a nominal Persian possession -- encircled on three sides by Russian territory. This area was occupied in 1881 when the Russians broke Turkoman resistance at the battle of Geok Tepe, and in the same year Russia and Persia agreed on the Atrek river as their boundary line.

By 1900 Turkey had ceded Russia Southern Bessarabia, Kars, Ardahan and Batum.

At the turn of the century, however, although Russia was thousands of miles closer to the area Peter the Great had coveted, she had not yet achieved her objective. This objective was cited in Novoe Vremya, a leading conservative St. Petersburg newspaper on April 28, 1901: "We do not desire India, but we must get down to the Persian Gulf."

#### WORLD WAR I

In World War I, with Turkey on the side of the central powers, and Russia allied with Britain and France, the situation seemed ideal

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for possible further Russian acquisitions leading toward the Middle East.

As P. N. Milyukov, later to be Foreign Minister in the 1917 provisional Russian Government, wrote in 1915:

"The participation of Turkey in the war on the side of our enemies has made it possible to put on the order of the day the solution of the age-old problem of our policy in the near east. The acquisition in complete possession of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles together with Constantinople, and of a sufficient part of the adjacent shores to insure the defense of the straits, must be the aim of this policy for the time being." (What Does Russia Expect From The War?), Petersburg, 1915, p. 57.

And this was the policy which Russia pursued. In 1915 she concluded an agreement with Britain and France which provided that at the war's end Russia would annex: Constantinople, the western coast of the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles; Southern Thrace as far as the Enos-Midia line; the coast of Asia Minor between the Bosphorus and the River Sakarya and a point on the Gulf of Izmir to be defined later; the islands in the Sea of Marmara and the Islands of Imbros and Tenedos.

Russia was at long last to have her "warm water" port to obtain the long-desired straits. And a subsequent agreement reached in St. Petersburg on April 26, 1916, forming part of what is generally known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, recognized Russia's right also to annex the Turkish provinces of Erzurum, Trabzon, Van, and Bitlis, as

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well as territory in the northern part of Kurdistan along a line from Mush, Siirt, Ibn Omar, and Amadiya, to the Persian border, comprising in all an area of roughly 60,000 square miles.

#### THE SOVIET ERA

With the collapse of the Tsarist regime, the Bolshevik Revolution, and Russia's withdrawal from the war, it seemed that an end had finally come to the Russian dream of expansion to the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Such was not the case however. Although the Communists denounced Russia's wartime treaties and returned Kars and Ardahan to Turkey, their change of policy was more apparent than real. The expressed Bolshevik desire to "liberate the Middle East from colonialism," which is still reiterated today, fell before reality; and it soon became clear that Soviet policy was dictated by practical power considerations rather than altruism.

Between the two world wars the Soviets instigated a Communist revolt in the Iranian province of Gilan and, later, attempted to establish a network of espionage, propaganda and subversion in northern Iran.

#### WORLD WAR II

On August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia signed a treaty of nonaggression, thus paving the way for the outbreak of World War II. During the following year, Germany proposed that the

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two states further cement their relations by joining with Italy and Japan in a Four Power pact. The offer presented Russia with a new opportunity to resume its march south: On November 26, 1940, Schulenberg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, informed Berlin that the Soviet Union was prepared to sign the pact if certain conditions were appended. One of these was for the establishment of a Russian naval base on the Straits, while another read: "Provided that the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union." A glance at a map will clearly show that the Soviet Union was, in effect, announcing its intention to annex a large part of Turkey and Iran as well as the greater portion of Iraq.

Fortunately for the middle east, Germany and Russia were unable to agree on the division of the envisaged spoils; and as is well known, German forces invaded Russia on June 21, 1941. Up to the last moment, however, the Soviet Union entertained hopes of achieving its age old ambitions in the Middle East through agreement with Germany.

Just a week before the German attack, Molotov was in Berlin where, on behalf of the Soviet Government, he offered Germany a full military alliance against England and her allies in return for, among other things, complete control of the Dardanelles, a free hand in Iraq and Iran, and an important position in Saudi Arabia so as to assure Russia's domination of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden.

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POST WAR MOVES

During the war, Russia, in conjunction with Britain, occupied Iran; and in a treaty of alliance concluded with Iran on January 22, 1942, the two occupying powers agreed to withdraw their troops within six months of the end of the war. Later, American troops were also in occupation. The United States never formally adhered to the tripartite treaty of alliance; but by means of the Tehran Declaration of December 1, 1943, issued by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at the conclusion of the Tehran Conference, the United States associated itself with the "desire" of its two allies to maintain "the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran." At the war's end, Britain and the United States completed withdrawal of their troops before the expiration of six months, as provided, but the Soviets refused to honor their pledge.

Instead of withdrawing her troops, the Soviet Union used them to sponsor and protect an autonomous Communist-controlled government in Azerbaijan, to help establish an autonomous Kurdish Republic in the Mahabad region, to force the Iranian Premier to grant an oil concession to the Soviet Union, and in general to consolidate Soviet influence in the country. It was not until May 1946, after Iranian protests to the United Nations Security Council had brought down on the Soviets the condemnation of the world, that Soviet troops were finally withdrawn.

Nor did the Soviets neglect Turkey. In June 1945 Russia demanded that Turkey cede her the districts of Kars and Ardahan, grant military bases on the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to the Soviets and agree

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to a revision of the 1936 Montreux Convention which would take the Black Sea straits from international control and place them in the hands of the Black Sea powers.

The story is told that the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, when called in by the Russian Foreign Minister and presented with the Russian demands, immediately replied that the demands would not be met.

In amazement the Russian foreign minister pointed out that the Ambassador was not empowered to reply to a government note and that the answer would have to come from the Turkish government in Ankara.

The Turk responded that a formal reply would be forthcoming from Ankara but that the reply would be no and he simply wanted the Russian government to know the answer immediately.

As an added pressure on Turkey, three important Soviet newspapers, on December 20, 1945, published an article written by two Georgian scholars who demanded that Turkey "restore" to the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic a Black Sea coastal region 180 miles long and 75 miles wide, which comprised eight Turkish provinces.

The Turkish determination to maintain their sovereignty and territorial integrity unimpaired regardless of consequences proved stronger than the Communists had expected, and the Turkish government continued resolutely to refuse to accede to the Soviet demands. The resulting increasingly strained Soviet-Turkish relations, together with communist guerrilla warfare in Greece, led in 1947 to the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine, under which extensive American aid was given Turkey to help her withstand Soviet pressures.

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The Soviet designs on Turkey and Iran, having been forestalled by the resistance of those states, backed in the first instance by American aid and in the second by United Nations support, came to a halt. But the respite was only temporary. Soviet activity began again on a large scale in 1955 after the Turkish-Pakistani Mutual Aid Agreement of April 2, 1954 became the Baghdad Pact of 1955. This alliance of Russia's immediate southern neighbors meant that the Soviets could not hope to progress through Turkey and Iran with impunity. The Soviets changed tactics, they decided to by-pass those countries and concentrate on the Arabs.

The change in tactics became evident in 1953. In June of that year the Soviets dropped their claim against Turkey for the Kars and Ardahan areas; incendiary broadcasts in Kurdish ended in August; a long-standing border dispute with Iran was settled in December 1954. In 1955 the Soviets concluded an arms agreement with Egypt. Recently they have expanded their middle east arms dealings to include Syria.

It is significant that Arab governments, once denounced by the Soviets in the most vitriolic terms, are now praised. The Nasser regime in Egypt, for example, as late as 1954 was characterized by Russia's leading Egyptian expert, L. Vatolina, as "madly reactionary, terrorist, anti-democratic, demagogic". Yet in June, 1956, Dmitri T. Shepilov, then Soviet foreign minister pledged to that regime "eternal and inviolable friendship between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Egypt."

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TODAY

The sale of arms to Egypt and Syria serves the Soviet objective threefold: economically, it provides the Soviets with a means to strengthen its grip on the economy of those countries; politically, it adds to the risk of war and so tends to create the instability which is so advantageous to Soviet tactics; and psychologically, it meets with a large appeal in the recipient countries and thus tends to boost Soviet prestige and influence. Such machinations as those recently carried on in Jordan and Syria can best be explained as attempts to create confusion, unrest and uncertainty, which the Communists have discovered by experience are the conditions in which they have the best chance of succeeding.

Soviet aims in the Middle East today are strategic and economic, but mainly strategic. Today Communist imperialism accounts for the largest empire on earth -- an empire which has grown by five million square miles and 732 million people of 17 countries since 1940. In Europe, the western Soviet border is protected by a thousand miles of satellite territory. In the north lies the ice of the Arctic; in the east, Communist China. Only in the south are the countries on Russia's borders not subservient to Moscow's will. The Soviets are working to change this situation.

It is evident that post-war military action in Iran failed to achieve success; harsh ultimatums failed to achieve success in Turkey. The Soviets have apparently abandoned these techniques for the present and are concentrating on winning the Middle East through diplomacy and subversion.

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The Soviets have never been more active in the diplomatic field in the Middle East than they are at present. The maintenance of large diplomatic missions in every Arab country, intensive propaganda activity by large and well-financed organizations, the manifestations of other activity along these lines are too well known to require amplification.

In every Middle Eastern country save Turkey there is an active (whether legally or illegally) Communist party whose every move is dictated by, and designed to serve, the interests of Moscow.

Today, Soviet Russia, thanks to the entree granted her by Egypt and Syria, is closer to achieving her ambitions than ever before. It must be remembered that it is not necessary for the Soviet Union's purposes that she occupy and annex the countries of the Middle East, though it should not be imagined that her hunger for more territory is yet appeased. It will be sufficient if she is able, as she was in the satellite states of Eastern Europe, to undermine existing regimes and establish subservient governments in their stead and thus control the area as surely as if Russian soldiers were in occupation.

The lesson of Dog River remains valid. The last inscription there dates from January 1947 and commemorates not the victory of a conquering army but the attainment of full independence by the Lebanese Republic. Only by keeping the Soviets and Communist influence out of the Middle East, by keeping the Soviets from realizing their ambitions for this area, can the Arabs be sure that the Lebanese inscription will be the last. A new inscription, whether it commemorated the passing of the Red Army or

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the establishment of a Communist-controlled government, would spell the end of Arab, of all Middle Eastern hopes.

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